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AQD Matters

Newsletter of the SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department

Volume 3, Number 1, 31 January 2006

SEAFDEC Sec-Gen Siri Ekmaharaj Tours AQD

21 January was a Saturday, but AQD turned up to welcome SEAFDEC Secretary-General Siri Ekmaharaj, Administration and Finance Coordinator Somnuk Pornpatimakorn, and Policy and Program Coordinator Suriyan Vichitlekarn. They toured AQD's hatcheries and laboratories escorted by Deputy Chief Dr. Koichi Okuzawa and AQD scientists and officers. AQD Chief RR Platon presented the AQD staff to Dr. Siri over lunch at TID. On Sunday, they were off to Igang in the morning and Dumangas in the afternoon. Monday saw Dr. Siri's party in Binangonan and Jalajala, and later at a dinner meeting with the AQD Chief and SEAFDEC Council Director Malcolm Sarmiento of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.



Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj is the SEAFDEC Secretary-General and concurrently Chief of the Training Department from 1 October 2005 until 30 September 2007.

Dr. Siri was earlier known by his name Tookwinas. A world-renowned expert in shrimp farming, he has been a long-time friend and collaborator of AQD, particularly in the FCG Program, Promotion of Mangrove-Friendly Aquaculture in Southeast Asia.





Participants in the Planning Workshop for the Integrated Regional Aquaculture Program, Bangkok, 30 Nov—2 Dec 2005

Planning for IRAP 2006-2010

SEAFDEC/AQD convened the Planning Workshop for IRAP 2006-2010 (second phase of the Integrated Regional Aquaculture Program) in Bangkok, Thailand from 30 November to 2 December 2005. The Workshop had 44 participants comprising representatives from the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Member Countries and SEAFDEC officials including Secretary-General Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj, Deputy Secretary-General Shintaru Suzuki, and Special Adviser Dr. Yasuhisa Kato. The Workshop was chaired by AQD Chief Dr. Rolando Platon. The AQD delegation also included Deputy Chief Dr. Koichi Okuzawa, Research Head Wilfredo Yap, BFS Head Dr. Ma. Lourdes Aralar, Virgilia Sulit, Eva Aldon, Demetrio Estenor, and Stephen Alayon.

IRAP is the Aquaculture Component of the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Special Five-Year Program, which has been going on since 2002. AQD also held an evaluation and planning meeting for IRAP in Bangkok in February 2005, where the Member Countries identified R&D areas for the second phase:

- Aquaculture of indigenous freshwater species
- Integrated agri-aquaculture systems
- Coastal aquaculture and mariculture
- Development of captive broodstock

The Workshop discussed the output of IRAP 2003-2005 and identified the problems that would be addressed during the second phase. Then the country representatives presented reports on the status of R&D according to a survey format where they:

- confirmed or specified priority species for each R&D area
- indicated the status of aquaculture technologies available in their respective countries
- identified the training needs and indicated whether the training should be at AQD, on-site in host country, attachment in another country, or study visits for farmers
- identified the information needs, in terms of manuals, farm demonstration, workshops, or other means



Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj presides over his first large SEAFDEC meeting as Secretary-General

The participants then developed the detailed plan of action for IRAP 2006-2010, including research, verification, training, information dissemination, study visits, and farm demonstration. Countries that have well developed farming technologies for particular commodities were identified as Core Countries that can provide technical assistance to recipient countries. Technology packages that are well developed in one country and known to be economically viable and environment-friendly will be considered for verification in another country. Countries with common interests in specific commodities were urged to collaborate in R&D.

During the Workshop, the country representatives recommended 14 priority projects and identified the countries to be involved in specific activities (see table next page). The table is quite a long wish list and a very tall order. Still, some of the recommended projects are already ongoing concerns at AQD in one form or another.

The recommendations were adopted at the Workshop as the proposed program of activities for IRAP 2006-2010, comprising two parts: Development of Technologies for Sustainable Aquaculture and Capacity-Building for Sustainable Aquaculture. The proposed program was submitted to the SEAFDEC Program Committee during its 28th Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand from 7 to 9 December 2005, for endorsement to the SEAFDEC Council and the ASEAN Working Group on Fisheries.

VT Sulit

1. Genetic improvement of <i>Macrobrachium rosenbergii</i>		
Manual on grow-out of <i>M. rosenbergii</i> in ponds and lake-based cages	2006	Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, AQD
Manual on protocols for the genetic characterization of <i>M. rosenbergii</i>	2007	Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines
Popular publication on genetic improvement of <i>M. rosenbergii</i>	2008	Thailand, Indonesia
Training for technical persons and extension officers on hatchery and grow-out of <i>M. rosenbergii</i>	2007	Thailand
Training for fish farmers in Core Countries	2007	Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines
On-site training for fish farmers, farm demonstration	2008	Lao, Cambodia, Myanmar, Brunei
Training on genetic characterization of <i>M. rosenbergii</i> for research officers	2007	AQD, Core Countries
2. Aquaculture of <i>Pangasius</i> spp. in member countries		
Manuals on broodstock development and seed production of <i>Pangasius boucourti</i>	2006	Vietnam
Manual seed production of <i>Pangasius nasutus</i>	2009	Malaysia
Manual on seed production of <i>P. sutchi</i>	2008	Thailand
Information network on genetics, broodstock development, and seed production	2006	AQD
3. Other indigenous freshwater fish species		
Information network on indigenous species of priority and being worked on in different member countries	2006	AQD, Member Countries
4. Rice-fish aquaculture		
Training for fishery officers and extension officers for rice-fingerling production	2009	Indonesia, AQD
Training for fish farmers on rice-fingerling production	2009	Member Countries
Farm demonstration in recipient countries	2008	Member Countries
Regional Technical Consultation on fish production in small farm reservoirs	2009	AQD
5. Culture technologies for tilapia		
Translation of tilapia manuals of AQD to different languages	2006-	Member countries
Training on tilapia hatchery and grow-out for technical staff and extension officers	2007	AQD and Member Countries
Farm demonstration	2008-	Member Countries
6. Grouper seed production		
Training on grouper seed production: focus on humpback grouper <i>Cromileptes altivelis</i> in Gondol	2006	Indonesia
Information exchange on grouper seed production and broodstock development	2006-	Member Countries, AQD
7. Mud crab seed production and grow-out (includes fattening and soft shell culture)		
Manual on mud crab larval rearing		
Translation to English of the Vietnamese manual; editing and printing	2006	Vietnam, AQD
Translation of English manual to Bahasa Melayu, Filipino, Thai, Burmese, Khmer	2007	Respective countries
Attachment training for representatives from ASEAN countries in RIA-3 (Vietnam)	2006	Vietnam, AQD
Pilot demonstration of mud crab grow-out	2006	Myanmar, AQD
8. Seed production and grow-out culture of abalone		
Training on seed production of abalone	2006	AQD
Site visit to commercial grow-out farms	2007	Thailand, AQD coordinating
9. Milkfish seed production and grow-out		
Training on hatchery and nursery of marine fishes (including milkfish)	2006-	Member Countries, AQD
Study visit to milkfish facilities in Philippines for Thailand and Vietnam	2006	Philippines and AQD
Technical assistance for establishment of milkfish hatchery	2007-	Vietnam
Pilot demonstration for grow-out culture of milkfish	2007-	Vietnam
10. Rabbitfish seed production and grow-out		
Training on hatchery and nursery of marine fishes including siganids	2006-	Member Countries, AQD
Technical assistance for siganid hatchery	2007-	Vietnam and Myanmar
Pilot demonstration for grow-out culture of siganids	2007-	Vietnam
11. Seed production and grow-out of cobia <i>Rachycentron canadum</i>		
Information exchange on status of cobia culture in the region	2006-	Member Countries, AQD
12. Mariculture Park (Marine Aqua-Industrial Park)		
Study visit to be coordinated by the Philippines and AQD (on cost-sharing scheme)	2007	Member Countries, AQD
13. Development of specific pathogen free shrimp (<i>Penaeus monodon</i>, <i>P. vannamei</i>) broodstock		
Information exchange on status of <i>Penaeus monodon</i> broodstock development and impact of <i>P. vannamei</i>	2006	Member Countries, AQD
14. Development of marine fish broodstock		
Information exchange on fish broodstock development including transport and handling	2006-	Member Countries, AQD



Participants of the Third Macrobrachium Round Table, Bangkok, 3-4 Dec 2005

The Third *Macrobrachium* Round Table

The project Genetic Improvement and Seed Production of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* has been conducted from 2003 to 2005 under the Aquaculture Component of the Special Five-Year Program. Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines each have research programs on *Macrobrachium* and have agreed to collaborate on genetic improvement. To assess the progress of the project, the Third Roundtable Discussion was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 3 to 4 December 2005. The Round Table was attended by 32 participants from the collaborating countries and from AQD, the SEAFDEC Secretariat, and the Training Department. Secretary-General Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj graced the Round Table and AQD Chief Dr. Rolando Platon chaired the sessions.

The researchers working in the *Macrobrachium* project each presented their latest results, and these were discussed in open forum. Indonesia presented the final report on the evaluation of the growth rate of GI Macro II strain in different locations. Thailand reported the progress of their work on selective breeding for genetic improvement of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii*. The Philippines presented four reports:

- Morphometric characterization and performance evaluation of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* stocks and closely related species found in the Philippines
- Collection, identification, and validation of *Macrobrachium* stocks
- Growth of two strains of *M. rosenbergii* in cages in Laguna de Bay
- Reproductive efficiency of two *M. rosenbergii* stocks

During the Planning Workshop for the Integrated Regional Aquaculture Program 2006-2010 held by AQD in Bangkok from 30 November to 2 December, Genetic Improvement of *M. rosenbergii* was identified as a priority project (see previous page). During the Round Table, a detailed plan and schedule of activities was agreed upon for implementation in 2006-2010.

A set of resolutions was also formulated for submission to the SEAFDEC Council:

- Research collaboration between Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand should be further strengthened through increased communication.
- AQD should encourage more active participation of other Member Countries.



Project researchers present results from Thailand and Indonesia



Project researchers present results from the Philippines and SEAFDEC/AQD



The Petchaburi Fisheries Test and Research Center has ponds with mud crab spawners

- AQD should package a proposal for genetic improvement of *Macrobrachium*, in consultation with the countries involved, for submission to funding agencies.
- SEAFDEC-ASEAN Member Countries should be cautious in introducing exotic or new stocks of *M. rosenbergii*. (Although many *Macrobrachium* species are native to most of the Member Countries, bringing in *Macrobrachium* stocks from another country poses risks in terms of disease transfer and contamination of local genetic resources.)

The Thailand representatives arranged a field trip to Petchaburi on 4 December for the roundtable participants to see the Aquatic Animal Genetics Research and Development Institute of the Department of Fisheries, the Petchaburi Fisheries Test and Research Center, and a private hatchery for the maculated ivory whelk *Babylonia areolata*. We also visited a private hatchery and grow-out farm for *M. rosenbergii* in Nakhonpathom and Ratchaburi.

VT Sulit

My Bangkok Experience

by Stephen Alayon (photos on back page)

Waking up early morning of 27 November 2005 was so difficult because I was so tired, having worked about 14 hours a day for two weeks already, preparing documents and equipment for four SEAFDEC meetings in a row, one in Manila and three in Bangkok. But the excitement of going to Thailand for the first time was so overpowering that I was out of bed by 3:30 before dawn. By 6, we had checked in and at 8 we were in Manila. While waiting to check in at noon for the Thai Airways 621 flight, we went to the nearest Goldilocks to buy some food and *pasalubong* for colleagues at the SEAFDEC Secretariat. Every now and then, we counted our luggage to make sure none was missing. We had *siopao* for lunch as we could not leave our bags nor the valuable few seats available. It was about 1:00 when we were finally checked in, and 1:30 when waitlisted Sir Demet was. We saved about US\$290 worth of extra baggage when the friendly TG clerk just warned us not to bring so much on our next trip to Bangkok.

Onboard I was seated next to Tita Eva and what a blessing! She was so choosy with food so I got all that she did not eat and presto – it was a real meal indeed. And the wine, I couldn't help but ask the cordial stewardess to give me some more. And then the much needed sleep. I woke up just when we approached Bangkok International Airport. The view from the plane was really overwhelming. I could see well-planned residential areas and water canals that looked like highways. Mr. Sonthikan and Mr. Lek of the Secretariat met us and we went through Immigration the quick VIP way.

On the way to Kasetsart University and the KU Home, where we were to stay for the next nine days, I was really impressed by the highways, skyways, expressways and U-turn slots. We got to KU Home about dusk and into our rooms nearly an hour later, after some hassle and negotiation with the desk in charge. Ma'am Sulit tried to be cool as ever despite obvious frustration. The communication barrier is quite formidable. Dinner was late and there was not much to choose from what was left at the food court of Tops Department Store, across KU Home, up and down a flyover with steep stairs.

There was hardly time to unpack our bags because we had to go to the 'Secretariat Room' which was the bedroom of Ma'am Sulit and Tita Eva. There was so much to do to make everything ready for the Meeting. The work was interspersed with eating and exchanging of funny experiences, mimicking friends and acquaintances at AQD (*panglibak* in Ilonggo). Even corny jokes became very funny. We were so engrossed with our chores we didn't notice it was already the 28th and when we could no longer do things right, we parted with 'good morning'.

We went to Pathumthani (three hours from Bangkok) to finalize arrangements for the field trip on 4 Dec. Dr. Supattra, Dr. Panom and Dr. Leelepat treated us to their specialty snacks. Tita Eva wouldn't even try them at first and when she did, she needed two glasses of water. We also went to the Training Department in Samutprakan to arrange the vehicle for the field trip. Posing time again— with the TD vessels (M/V SEAFDEC, M/V Platoon) as background. Across the street is the training complex— lecture rooms, cafeteria, dormitory, etc. After dinner, we prepared more documents and finished everything so we could go to the Grand Palace the next day.

We left KU Home early for the Grand Palace. There I was like a model posing everywhere (courtesy of Ma'am Sulit, photographer). Majestic, amazing, spectacular, overwhelming, awesome (what else?) — words can not vividly describe the Grand Palace. I couldn't imagine how the Thais built and then preserved all those exquisitely ornate and beautiful structures. This museum of a very rich socio-cultural heritage speaks of the Thais as one of the finest people in the world. They must be getting a huge income from the entrance fees because one can see hordes of people of different nationalities coming in and out of the palace. That visit was a very enriching educational experience for me.

We went to the Central Plaza for lunch and what a small world indeed! We bumped into Dr. Platon who was having *durian* at the food court; he joined us at Shakey's. There was discussion about the forthcoming meetings, and the potential problems that might arise. I wished then that the heavens would intervene and cut short their discussion because I was itching to go to Pratunam to squander my DSA! I had a long list of items to buy. We went to the one store known to be the *suki* of most Filipinos. My God, it was cool! Leather wallets, bags and belts, signature clothes— famous brands, mind you, name it, they have it (ssssshhhh, they just look very much like the originals). We were led to the next store up to the 2nd and 3rd floors where only *suki* are allowed because the merchandise are imitations. The penalty is quite stiff, said the owner. We wanted to buy one of everything. Sir Demet reminded us not to buy too many or too heavy because Pratunam is far from KU Home. We ignored his warning. When we were done shopping wildly, we tried to get a taxi but could not. The taxi drivers would charge exorbitant fares because of the traffic. We took a *tuktuk* to the nearest sky train station and we had to transfer from one vehicle to another four times to get back to KU Home. Thank God, there were no snatchers — we would have been easy prey.

Then came the successive meetings, the very reason I was in Bangkok, but that is not for me to tell about. Anyway, they all went smoothly. As usual, we could hardly get good sleep (read: straight 2-3 hours a night). The field trip to Petchaburi also went well, with a sumptuous lunch in one of the beach resorts. On our way, we saw vast land planted with different vegetables on one side, the next with roses and other kinds of flowers. I noticed that the planted lots were surrounded with water canals stocked with fish — the so-called integrated farming. Cool!

We were lucky to be in Bangkok for King's Bhumipol's birthday and we had the chance to see the Imperial Palace and the surrounding streets fully lighted, it was truly awesome! The Thais really respect and love their King, and for very good reasons.

The Friday morning market at the Department of Fisheries was another experience, I can't help but tell. There again were a lot of imitation products, mostly English brands. Thailand is really a place for shoppers. The prices of goods are very reasonable, and less than at home. There were so many places I wanted to go to but there was no time. For one, I missed Chatuchak where goods are really inexpensive (*kuno!*). I also missed the elephant ride, the floating market, and Thai massage. I wanted to relieve myself of fatigue but when there was time, the nearest shop was closed.

It is hard to communicate with the Thais, but they are really nice people and there are always ways and means to understand and be understood. I had a lot of funny experiences communicating with them. There are still a lot more to tell but it maybe would need three issues of AQD Matters. I know the memories of Thailand will always be with me.

ISEP6 in Pattaya does an AQD circa 2004

The Sixth Meeting of the Information Staff Exchange Program of SEAFDEC was held in Pattaya, Thailand from 14 to 16 December 2005. The Meeting was attended by SEAFDEC Secretary-General Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj, other officials, and information officers of the Secretariat and the four Departments. From AQD came TID Head TU Bagarinao, Information Assistant AS Ledesma, and Network and Systems Administrator JB Gebucion. ISEP supports capacity-building for the information staff of the Secretariat and the Departments.

The Meeting took note of the progress of information programs conducted by the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments. I presented the paper “SEAFDEC/AQD’s information services and products: bridging the gap between R&D and seafood production” and showed just how much AQD has intensified and diversified its information program, a lot more than the other Departments have.

The Meeting discussed ways to improve the Secretariat’s information tools to cope with the current funding crisis and the new requirements of the Council. For example, the SEAFDEC website will have new features: a running events calendar with documentation, a SEAFDEC staff directory, and a database of SEAFDEC publications and technical papers. The meeting included a strategic planning workshop on enhancing SEAFDEC visibility and communication, the proceedings of which were much like what AQD went through during the streamlining in 2003-2004.



SEAFDEC’s information staff commit themselves to enhancing SEAFDEC visibility and communication

The Meeting agreed that future ISEP meetings should be organized every year before the Program Committee Meeting so that the progress of SEAFDEC information activities as well as the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Enhancing SEAFDEC Visibility and Communication be monitored, assessed, and appropriately reported to the PCM. The directives during each ISEP should form the basis of information activities the following year. ISEP should be hosted by the Secretariat and all the Departments on rotation basis, with support from the Secretariat. The output of ISEP6 will be submitted to the next Meeting of Department Chiefs for policy support and endorsement to the SEAFDEC Council.

T Bagarinao



Pattaya beach at sunrise, looking towards Cambodia. Pattaya has a checkered past and present, having been an R&R port during the Vietnam War. Today it is full of tourists of all kinds. The beach is marvelously clean, and puts many of ours to shame.

Bangkok and Pattaya on the side by Arvee Ledesma

We took a Philippine Airlines flight and arrived in Bangkok at one o'clock. Mr. Lek met us and Mr. Sonthikan guided us through the fast diplomats' lane at Immigration. We were taken to the Secretariat —Ma'am Doris, Nong Jhez, and I, together with Vijay Krishnan Chandran, the Administration, Information and Training Officer from MFRD Singapore. I was amazed at how big the Kasetsart University campus was. The Department of Fisheries Thailand sits at one corner of KU. The SEAFDEC Secretariat occupies half of the Suraswadi Building of the DOF, and the other half houses the Network of Aquacultures Centres in the Asia-Pacific. Mr. Lek took us through the DOF buildings to the Bangkok Aquarium, a 3-storey building with well maintained aquaria of freshwater fishes, frogs, crabs and prawn. We took lots of pictures, including one of us in front of a mounted skeleton of the giant Mekong catfish *Pangasianodon gigas*. Then we went to the WS Johnson Library of the DOF, where Ma'am Doris left her digital camera while trying out the online public access in Thai.

The bus ride to Pattaya took two hours along wide expressways amid green countryside with the characteristic Thai temples here and there. By the infrastructures, Thailand looks really progressive and the Thais proud and respectful of themselves. It was getting dark when we arrived at Markland Hotel, 27 storeys of it right on Pattaya Beach. The view from my 7th floor room was magnificent (see previous page). Thai food was an adventure for me; I enjoyed going through every meal, taking small bites of whatever seemed delicious. There was lots of sea food which I enjoyed the most.

The ISEP meetings usually started at 8:30 in the morning, after breakfast at the Sky Restaurant on the 27th floor. There were only 19 of us, 9 from Secretariat. The meeting was formal during the first few hours, but soon everyone was at ease. I kept writing down notes since Ma'am Doris told me I was to write the report about the meeting. She is determined to squeeze some writing skills out of my management degree.

Then we went into a strategic planning workshop, starting with an analysis of each Department's Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities, and Threats. Then we presented ideas on how to enhance SEAFDEC visibility and communication. We tried to set a vision for the information program of SEAFDEC in the next 5 years. It was not easy to formulate a vision because some liked it long and others liked it short. Ma'am Doris suggested that the vision could be: *Fish for the People*, the theme of the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Millennium Conference in 2001. The draft vision was left to the Secretariat to finalize. We broke into two groups to set some goals, and think of strategies to achieve the goals. My management background turned out handy, after all.

One night, the AQD trio ventured onto the beach sand to find shell specimens for FishWorld. We were impressed at how clean the beach was, as far as we could see to the water's edge at very low tide. *Wala gid basura*. Both Ma'am Doris and Nong Jhez felt so sad about the shameful littering and degradation of Villa Beach in comparison. A busy road runs all along Pattaya Beach. All the hotels, restaurants, malls, and other buildings were on the landward side of the road. Seaward of it, there were only boats, clean sand, beach umbrellas, trees, benches, and intriguing public sculptures.

After the meeting, the Secretariat took the group to Nong Nooch Tropical Garden, a vast privately owned European-style park where most of the plants are sculptured into animal shapes or arranged in geometric patterns in a magnificent landscape. I enjoyed taking pictures of the gardens. The gardeners worked like Edward Scissorhands. Together with thousands of tourists, we watched a Thai cultural show. The sets were beautiful and all performers wore really colorful costumes and showed off Thai tradition and ceremonies, dances from the north and south, sword fighting, kick-boxing, and fighting atop elephants. There was even a Thai version of *tinikling*.

We moved to an outdoor arena and the elephants came out and showed off their skills— football, basketball, bowling, dancing, painting, and even massaging people. Ma'am Doris bought one of the paintings done by a huge elephant. Bananas were sold to the crowd to give to the elephants after each performance. One of them got really close to me and I was afraid it would hurt me. But they were all gentle giants.

It took four hours to get to KU Home in Bangkok. We explored the city that night by taxi, *tuktuk*, and subway, and bought a few things at the Suan Luan night bazaar. Next morning, we had a few hours shopping at Chatuchak before we left for Manila. It is truly fortunate that SEAFDEC now has regional programs that allow young people like me to participate in its activities and allow us some education by tourism on the side.



If only Villa Beach was as clean as Pattaya, it could bring in a fortune in tourism



The Grand Palace
in Bangkok...

